

MINUTES  
SOAG MEETING  
13 February 1973

1. Present were: Robert S. Wattles

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2. Unsigned Memo on "Favoritism" - Mr. Wattles

a. On 9 February 1973 the Office of the DDS received an envelope marked "DDS/SOAG Room 7D16." Within the envelope was a typed memorandum with the subject heading "Favoritism." The gist of the unsigned paper complained about a Support Careerist's assignment to an important European field station in lieu of the fact of his (1) inexperience in working with the CS, (2) lack of training in the CS, (3) never having been overseas, and (4) working only within one Directorate throughout his career. The paper lamented that two other Support careerists who were qualified for the overseas position "were not considered." It ended with the comment: "It is not what you know. It is who you know."

b. That such a correspondence was presented in this manner is disquieting to say the least. The implication of "favoritism" in assigning positions in the Career Service is very upsetting since the Office of the Deputy Director for Support does not in reality utilize this method when selecting candidates for overseas slots. What the author did not know is that it is standard operating procedure that in all overseas assignments, candidates in two grades above and two below the position are considered. The emphasis is always to have more people be qualified - not less. This is an old operating rule. A primary consideration is to assign a role to that person who would benefit most from the assignment in terms of career development. Therefore, in this particular instance, the individual selected was done so for his own future benefit and not because he happened to be somebody's "favorite."

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c. In reference to this memorandum, both Mr. Coffey and myself would like it made known again that we are always receptive to hear any grievance arising from subjects of a Support nature. We practice the "open door" policy in this respect and encourage frank discussion between the executive group and junior officers. This is one positive manner whereby we can effectively eradicate lingering doubts about a Support Careerist's personal development. Our feeling about the unsigned memorandum is that it stemmed from either (1) a misunderstanding on the present practice of assigning positions overseas, or (2) that the author simply lacked the courage because of fear of future reprimands, to come to Mr. Coffey, Mr. [ ] or myself in talking out the problem.

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### 3. SOAG's Discussion Concerning the "Favoritism" Memorandum

a. First of all, the SOAG Committee members agreed that the note being addressed to SOAG in itself (even though unsigned) was a plus factor for us. Evidently the author felt that SOAG was the most secure means by which his complaint could be transmitted to the DDS office. That it was not mailed to any specific SOAG member is not surprising since three of the current group are new appointees.

b. This brings us to the second point: Why didn't the author voice his dissatisfaction to the CMO or Mr. Coffey or Mr. Wattles? The overwhelming opinion of SOAG on why not was that the anonymous writer would invariably have jeopardized his personal career in the Support Career Service by so doing. The phrase "shot himself in the foot" would apply here. SOAG is not alone in this attitude. Being representatives of fellow Support personnel of whom we have daily contact, we can confidently say the general consensus is the same.

c. The present lack of free and open communication between junior "S" career members and top "S" management personnel is not based upon any statistical data showing the "graveyard" of people who have ventured to challenge executive prerogatives and came out winning the battle, but losing the war; but rather it is founded in a well grounded belief that the possibility strongly exists; i.e., fear. Among the more important considerations in this respect are the personalities of parties involved in such discussions, the information available to both sides to make a coherent case, and a feeling of mutual trust and understanding based on previous experience and personal relationships. (Note: This topic may be on the agenda of the Fall Conference of "S" Careerists [ ] All of these factors are not peculiar to this Agency

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in management relationships, but prevalent in other Federal and city offices as well as in private industry. The Agency need not feel outdated or out of line but should realize that the "credibility or generation gap" (whatever the terminology) exists between the two groups. Bridging this hiatus will take a responsive and positive attitude by upper and lower management personnel. One avenue whereby this can be accomplished is through informal social gatherings or periodic general discussion meetings where "S" Careerists from all area divisions will be invited to air their views on potential problem areas. As an incentive for such a program, SOAG will be inviting junior "S" personnel (four to six) to every SOAG meeting for the express purpose of providing an outlet for lingering questions in the minds of junior officers. In short, SOAG will attempt to survey just what are the specific gripes of "S" Careerists in this Agency.

4. SOAG is currently working on the idea of publishing a weekly or biweekly newsletter in which substantive news and comments concerning Support matters will be printed. A section devoted to "fan mail" will be included in the newsletter, thus eliminating the need for "poison pen" notes, letters or memoranda. Other suggestions by SOAG members to improve the information dissemination process for all Career Service Support Officers included (a) a Support Officer's Handbook, (b) an attitudinal survey, (c) a briefing in the future role Support Officers will be playing in the SIPS program, and (d) obtaining publications from other Government agencies that could be of interest to us; for example, from State, the Foreign Services Institute, DOD and even the Department of Agriculture.

5. Test Results of SOAG's Proposed Evaluation System.

a. Mr. Wattles said that he was disturbed by the sub-panel's conclusion in the rankings it gave on the test cases of the Proposed Evaluation System. He emphasized that 23 positions of the 39 people sampled by the sub-panel differed considerably from those ranked using the present system. The most important revelation derived from the whole exercise is that we must improve the documentation of records in order to provide a much better profile of each candidate reviewed for promotion.

b. Since the original members of the SOAG group who devised the new system are no longer members, the present group decided to invite them to hammer out any differences on the exact meaning of terminology used in the SOAG rating system. The report of the sub-panel on the SOAG system recommended several changes and also requested clarification on specific words used in the Evaluation System. SOAG will participate in the deliberations between the original authors of the System and the sub-panel that conducted the test.

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IF YOU ARE GOING TO  
MEET (ALONE / HOPE) WITH  
THE JUNIORS YOU SHOULD  
READ THIS FIRST —

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IS PULLING

TOGETHER SOME FACTS —

WE CAN DISCUSS SOME  
CAMBODIA WHEN THAT IS  
IN HAND —



TRANSMITTAL SLIP

DATE

TO: Mr. Coffey/Mr. *Wattles*

ROOM NO.

BUILDING

REMARKS:

STAT

FROM:

BUILDING

FORM NO. 241  
1 FEB 55

REPLACES FORM 36-8  
WHICH MAY BE USED.

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